Grow Tent Starter Kit

Plan a small indoor garden you can reach, observe, and care for.



Start here: This kit is for herbs and vegetables in pots with potting mix, not a hydroponic system. Complete pages 1-3, keep page 4 nearby, and reprint page 5 each week.

01 / SET UP BEFORE YOU SOW

Check each item before adding plants. Start with a small number of pots and leave room for growth.

- ☐ **Space & access**
  I can open the tent and reach every pot without moving electrical equipment.
- ☐ **Containers & mix**
  Pots have drainage holes, catch trays, and fresh potting mix for edible container crops. [3]
- ☐ **Safe equipment**
  Lights, supports, timer, and fans are secured and used according to their instructions.
- ☐ **Air exchange**
  The tent can exchange air with the room. Intake and exhaust paths are clear; room moisture is manageable.
- ☐ **Water & power**
  Plugs and connections stay dry and away from watering and runoff. Damaged equipment is not in use.
- ☐ **Gentle circulation**
  Air can move around the pots and leaves without a fan constantly bending or drying the plants.
- ☐ **Light & timer**
  My light covers the planned growing area. Its height and output follow the fixture guidance for my crop and stage.
- ☐ **Useful measurements**
  A temperature / humidity sensor sits near plant height, out of direct spray and away from the lamp.

TEST THE SYSTEM TOGETHER

Run the light and fans before planting. Observe conditions with lights on and off, confirm the timer works, and check that heat or moisture does not build up. Recheck after adding plants.

Use crop-specific guidance for temperature, humidity, and light. Follow equipment instructions and local electrical-safety requirements. Sources are linked on page 5.

CHOOSE A MANAGEABLE FIRST CROP

Make room for the grown plant

Choose something you enjoy eating. Plan for its mature width, root space, and height, not just the size of the seedling.

GOOD CANDIDATES TO CONSIDER

Loose-leaf lettuce	A useful first leafy crop. Choose a compact variety and leave room for leaves to spread. Heat can encourage bolting.
Culinary herbs	Basil or chives can suit a small setup. Their needs differ; pick one and check its light, moisture, and temperature guidance.
Compact fruiting crops	Dwarf tomatoes or peppers are a later option. Allow for more light, root space, support, and flower/pollination care.

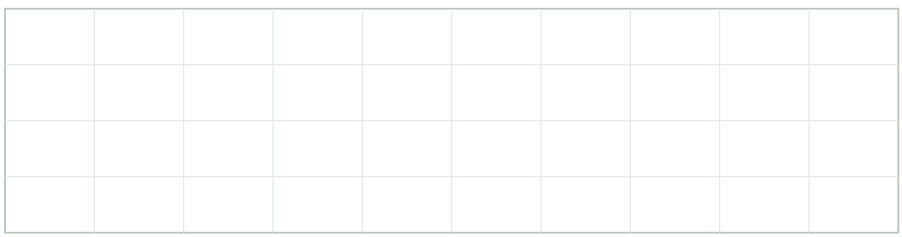
Your seed supplier's variety description and container guidance take priority. "Dwarf" or "bush" does not always mean tiny. Avoid crowding crops with very different needs. [3, 4]

MY FIRST PLANTING

Crop / variety	Number	Pot size + spacing	Sow / transplant date

SKETCH YOUR LAYOUT

Mark pots, lamp coverage, fan, and a clear path for watering and harvest.



Tent floor size

Available plant height*

*After allowing for pots, light fixture, and the manufacturer's required clearance.

BUILD A REPEATABLE START

From seed to sturdy seedling

Read the packet before sowing. Depth, germination conditions, and transplant timing vary by crop and variety. [1]

1 **Prepare clean containers**

Use trays or pots with drainage holes and fresh seed-starting mix. Clean reused equipment and disinfect as its product label directs. [1, 2]

2 **Sow and label**

Moisten the mix evenly. Follow packet directions for seed depth and spacing; label the crop, variety, and sowing date. Avoid packing many plants into one cell. [1]

3 **Check moisture and germination**

Keep the mix moist, not saturated. Check below the surface as well as on top. Use any heat mat according to its instructions and the crop's needs. [1, 2]

4 **Remove covers after emergence**

A dome holds moisture before germination. Remove it as seedlings emerge. Provide suitable light and gentle air movement; avoid damp, still air. [1, 2]

5 **Give each seedling room**

Thin crowded seedlings. Adjust light as plants grow, following the fixture's guidance. When roots fill a cell and growth needs more room, move suitable crops into larger pots carefully. [1, 4]

6 **Feed only when needed**

Check whether the mix already contains fertilizer. Follow crop and product directions; more fertilizer is not a remedy for every pale leaf. If plants will move outside, harden them off first. [1, 2]

RECORD THIS BATCH

Crop / variety

Sown on / first emergence

Packet germination guidance

Next check / next action

OBSERVE BEFORE ADJUSTING

Troubleshoot one step at a time

Symptoms can have several causes. Check moisture, light, temperature, airflow, and recent changes before adding products. [2, 4]

What you notice	Check first	A sensible next step
Tall, thin seedlings	Light output and height; shading from nearby leaves; crowding.	Adjust light within fixture guidance. Thin or reposition crowded seedlings; review new growth.
Wilting leaves	Is the root zone dry or still wet? Is the pot light or heavy? Check heat and drainage.	Water a dry mix as needed and drain excess. If wet, do not add more water; check drainage and roots.
Pale or yellow leaves	Which leaves changed? Check moisture, roots, light, and the mix's fertilizer history.	Correct the likely cause first. Only add fertilizer when crop needs and product directions support it.
Bleached or crisp leaves	A recent light change, lamp proximity, strong fan exposure, dry mix, or excess fertilizer.	Remove the suspected stress carefully. Avoid changing every setting at once; inspect new leaves.
Wet walls or still air	Condensation, blocked vents, crowded foliage, runoff, and humidity in the surrounding room.	Clear airflow paths, remove standing runoff, and manage room moisture. Keep electrics dry.
Seedlings collapse at the soil line	Soft or pinched stems can indicate damping off, especially in wet mix. [2]	Separate affected trays; discard collapsed seedlings and their mix. Clean tools, avoid shared runoff, and improve conditions.

Stop and get help: For spreading damage or an uncertain diagnosis, photograph the whole plant, leaf undersides, stems, and pot, then ask your local Extension service. Use pesticides only if the label permits the crop, problem, and indoor use.

PRINT A FRESH COPY EACH WEEK

Your weekly grow log

Check plants daily. Record observations at a similar time so patterns are easier to compare. Write the unit and whether lights are on or off.

Week of _____ **Crop / variety** _____

Daily: feel the mix, look at leaves and stems, check for pests, and inspect trays. **Weekly:** review growth, spacing, light clearance, supports, and equipment condition.

Day / date	Mix / pot weight	Temp + humidity Lights on / off	Plant changes	Water / feed / action
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

This week's harvest or useful lesson _____ **One next step + when to recheck** _____

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

1. UMN Extension: Starting seeds indoors
2. UMN Extension: How to prevent seedling damping off
3. UMD Extension: Growing vegetables in containers and salad tables
4. UMN Extension: Lighting for indoor plants and starting seeds

General home-growing guidance. Adapt to your crop, variety, growing mix, and equipment. November 2026.